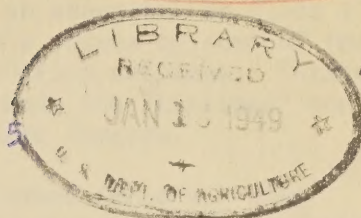


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RURAL LIFE TRENDS - REPORT NO. 5

Broward County, Florida



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I. GENERAL SUMMARY OF CONDITIONS IN COUNTY

A. General Activity in County

There is little agricultural activity in Broward County at the present time. Harvestings of fruits and vegetables are completed with the exception of some few groves of summer oranges that are being picked. A few of the farmers are clearing irrigation ditches and cutting vegetation on the land that will be plowed under later. A few others, in the southern part of the county, are getting their seed beds ready for fall vegetables. On the whole, however, this month is a period of waiting for Broward County farmers.

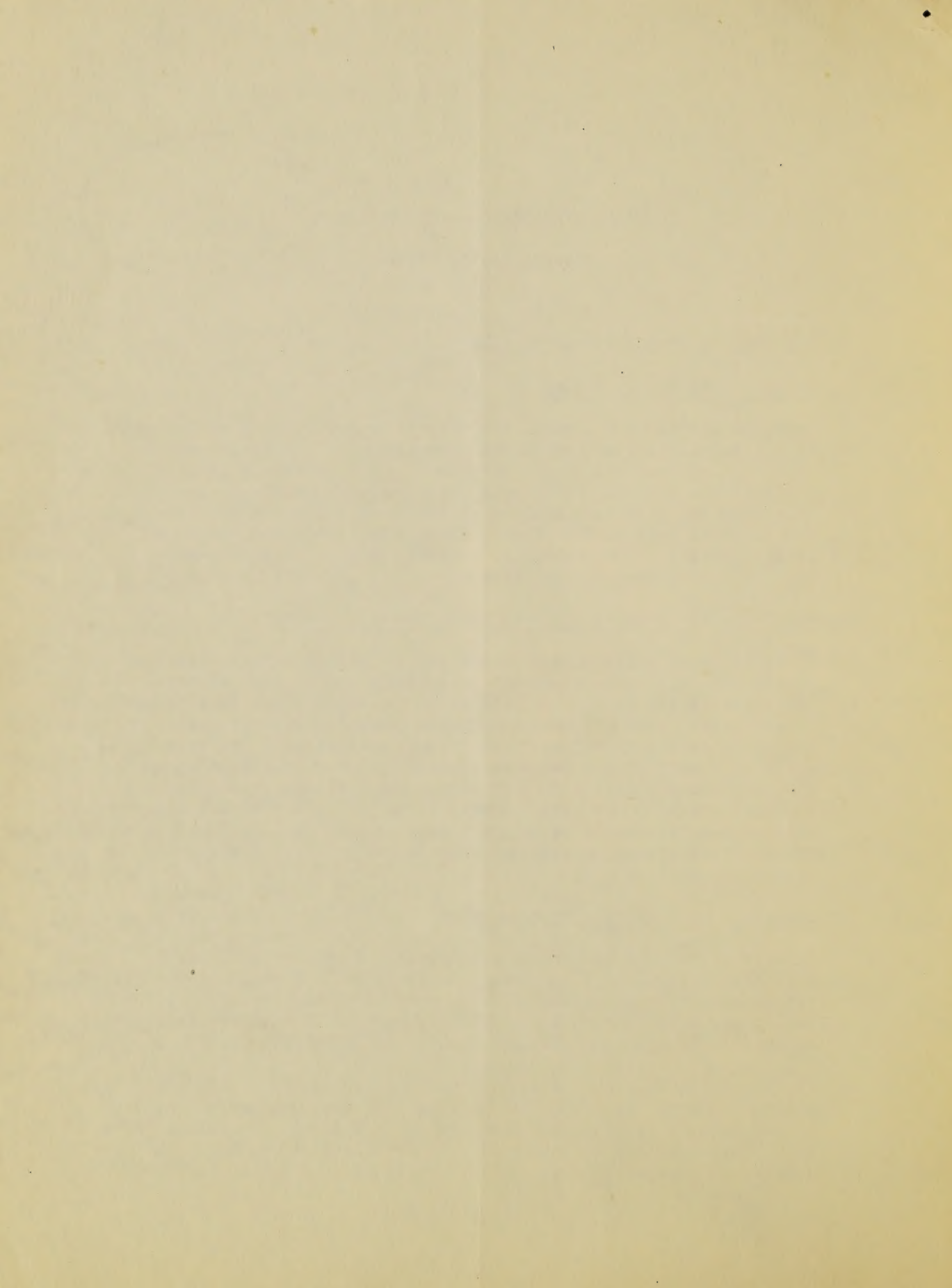
B. Prospects for Broward Agriculture in the Coming Year

There is every indication that the vegetable crop acreage for Broward County this fall will equal and very likely exceed that of last year. This observation is made despite often expressed fears that limitations on production such as: machinery, farm labor, fertilizer, etc., are likely to interfere seriously with local production. There is little doubt that many of the fears so frequently heard expressed are real. However, Broward County farmers accept the fact that producing a satisfactory crop has been historically a gamble and a vast majority of them are determined to take a chance on the "jack-pot" this year and are hoping that in some way they do not yet see, their needs for production will be met.

C. Shortages as Handicaps to Production

Farmers of Broward County are fairly well pleased with the farm machinery situation. They have been promised 80 percent of the new farm machinery sold in 1940 and 160 percent of the repair parts sold during the same year. This allotment, most of the farmers feel, will adequately take care of their machinery and repair needs.

The fertilizer picture is not too unpromising to the Broward farmers. Although the grades of fertilizer they have been using are changing somewhat, most farmers feel that the new grades will be satisfactory. Their biggest worry is in the organic fertilizer situation. The muck land where many of the beans are grown requires about 50 percent organic





fertilizer and this may be more difficult to get. Emphasis will undoubtedly be on crops designated by the WFA as essential or Class A crops although many farmers are going to "take a chance on some of the non-essential ones," that are not held down by price ceilings. Farmers who planted the non-essential crops last year made the "killings" and such examples were by no means ignored by Broward farmers.

Farm labor is still the Number One worry of Broward farmers. This worry is not a new one, as each year the farm workers drift out of the area and State during the inactive months and there is always the question as to whether they will come back in the fall. Until this year the "big" farmers of the county have sent trucks out of the State each year to recruit labor and many of them are pessimistic about the discouragement they are getting for doing it this year. Most of the big farmers say now, "We could solve the labor problem this year providing the Government would turn us loose and let us do our own recruiting."

The schools and townspeople will probably be used this year to some extent in the harvesting season. Neither schoolchildren nor townspeople are welcome, however, before the harvest season. Most farmers will dismiss the question by saying, "They will do us more harm than good."

Any Bahamian labor that may be spared the area this winter will be welcome. However, the labor branch of the War Food Administration, in Palm Beach, handling this situation is encouraging Broward farmers to think of this source of labor as a supplementary and not an initial supply. Records in the Palm Beach W.F.A. office indicate that between four and five thousand Bahamians will be in this country by November of this year but no definite allotment has been made to Broward County.

#### D. Summary Statement

In summary, an observer in Broward County now gets the impression that the farmers are struggling with a gigantic problem of adjustment they haven't yet been able to make. They see in the war situation a definite possibility of "cleaning up" if they can just force their needs through the many channels of present restrictions. This state of mind is evident in their attitude toward shortages of machinery, fertilizer, and labor. Last year was the best all-around crop year they have ever had. This year they have the money to pay for the things they want and can't see why they shouldn't be allowed to buy them. Very much this same thing is true in their attitude toward the Negro farm laborer. Until recently they have been able to get all the labor they wanted at the time they pleased and could treat them as they chose. True, these privileges cost them money in the somewhat higher wages paid locally as compared with that in other parts of the State or region. Today in Broward County the Negro is enjoying a new kind of independence. He can get ample off-farm employment, he can have farm





employment any time he likes and, if he chooses, make take a short vacation. There is little doubt that many more local Negro laborers in Broward County would now be employed on local farms if the farmers, as one Negro expressed it, "would stop confusing us in our minds." As yet, however, the farmer has not seen fit to compromise. He is still hoping that something will happen to force the Negro back into the old channels of employment. The manner in which this problem is resolved will have considerable effect on what the supply of farm labor in Broward County will be during the peak harvest season of the coming fall and winter months.

## II. SIGNIFICANT FACTORS, WITH EMPHASIS ON CHANGES, IN EACH OF THE PROJECT'S MAJOR FIELDS OF INTEREST

### A. Rural Manpower Adjustments

Amplly covered in I and III

### B. Production Adjustments

There seems to be little likelihood for a great deal of change in the crop production pattern for Broward County during the coming year. Beans and tomatoes are the principal war crops grown in Broward County and there is every indication that last season's acreage in these crops will be equalled if not surpassed this year. Many of the farmers state that they may plant more non-essential or Class B crops this year than last, but most of this will probably be added to, rather than subtracted from, last year's acreage of essential crops. The non-essential crops that will probably exceed last year's acreage will certainly include peppers, eggplant and probably will include squash and cucumbers as well. Farmers who planted these crops last year, as mentioned earlier, made almost fantastic profits on them. Such crops produced heavily last year and, since they were not under price ceilings, brought high prices, new in the county's history. Such experiences did not go unnoticed and many farmers expect to benefit by these experiences this year.

Agency people in the county are trying to discourage over-planting of B crops as much as possible. The farmers are constantly being told that A crops will have all priorities in securing machinery, fertilizer, and labor. This, however, has not killed the desire to "take a chance on a few acres."

Some new land is being cleared this year and other brought into cultivation for the first time in a number of years. Much of this new or reclaimed land is being cultivated by operators who are farming for the first time for themselves. The older or better established farmers, on the other hand, are limiting their land pretty much to what was cultivated last year. Most of them say, "We would like to clear more land but labor is too high now to justify our doing it."





You can't afford to clear new land and pay \$3.00 a day for workers." Land that the older farmers are clearing is largely for seed-land or beds for young plants that will be set out later.

Some few large farmers are going a little more heavily into cattle and other stock-raising. This change, however, does not seem to be overly significant as yet.

Although the dairy farmers are complaining bitterly about the lack of skilled workers, there seems to be little selling off of herds. Instead, some of them are expanding rather rapidly--buying dairy cattle over the State that are being sold off in current auctions. As a neighbor of a dairy farmer expressed it, "It doesn't look too bad for the dairy farmers, the way they are adding to their herds."

#### C. Consumer Adjustments

Only a few farmers failed to mention the fact that their families were depending more upon home grown foods. As was pointed out in Rural Trends Report No. 4 for Broward County, farmers have been canning more food this year than previously. Some of the surplus vegetables of last season were taken care of in this way. However, many of the farmers expressed disappointment in that greater cooperation was not received last year from the town people in this respect. As an example, several Dania tomato growers offered to allow town people to pick tomatoes on the halves, but, according to the farmers, "they wouldn't do it."

There is little evidence that rationing has seriously interfered with the consumption pattern in Broward County. Major changes seem to be among the small farmers and farm labor families which have money enough now to more nearly afford their minimum needs of food and clothing.

#### D. War Participation

Few comments were heard relative to how the war was being won and when it would be over. The general opinion among farmers seems to be that the war front is being handled satisfactorily but somewhat to the neglect of the home front. The local farm group as a whole is anti-administration generally in their comments and are quick to blame most anything that goes badly for them to the "Washington Bureaucrats." "They don't understand the Florida farmer," is a comment frequently heard, and "If they would just let us alone here in Florida, we would get along fine."

There is little farmer group participation in the war effort. Little attempt has been made by Federal agencies to organize the farm groups in the manner often found in other states. True, they are buying

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bonds, but largely as an investment. As a local farmer expressed it, "We are too darn individualistic to work together. We have always tried and are still trying to cut each other's throats." This phenomenon is recognized by the farmers universally and lamented now by quite a few. Fear of its consequence this fall is often heard expressed in such farmer comments as, "Our competition for labor this fall is going to drive the price sky high," and, "We are going to try to steal each other's labor this year just as we always have when we needed it."

### E. Community and Institutional Adjustments

The County Court House is increasingly becoming the general clearing house for the farmers. A year ago, the big farmers of Broward County were trying to by-pass the county governmental offices in getting what they wanted. It is becoming increasingly clear now, however, that county offices (especially that of the County Agent) are now the centers to which one must go for expeditious information and often the only source from which information and current needs may be gotten at all. Out of this has grown, and is growing, a new recognition of the need for such offices and that they exist for the benefit of the farmer and not to police or regulate him. This too has been a slow adjustment. It has not been easy for a big farmer to ask favors of local agencies and individuals. Rather, he preferred to deal directly with State officers or distant supply houses to get what he needed or thought he had to have.

## III. CURRENT MANPOWER SITUATION

### A. Nature of the Farm Outlook for Peak-Work Period

1. Farmers do not expect to meet peak labor needs with labor that is available locally. The Florida Vegetable Area depends heavily upon migratory workers who drift into the Area during the months of September and October and remain until April or May of the following year. The situation, as a whole, seems about as it was in 1942. Farmers hope that at least as many workers will come in as came in 1942. At least there is little effort being expended in the County to make up for any deficit.
2. According to a labor survey just completed by the county farm placement man, a minimum of 3,500 additional workers will be needed in the County from December 1 through May 1944. Almost all of this labor need has been indicated by the large farmers, i.e., the bean growers in the northern part of the County and a few of the tomato and other vegetable growers of the southern part of the County. The needs of the small farmers are not included in the above figures. Many of them will be able to do all of their own work or else will need additional help for





only a few days during the season. The small farmers express considerable fear that their needs may be sacrificed to the big farmers. "It is harder for us to get help," they will say. "The workers prefer the big growers and we have to pay from 25% to 50% more per day than the big grower, to get them."

3. Little complaint is heard in Broward County as to the policy of the local draft board in deferring farm workers. In general, the attitude seems to be that the board has been rather liberal in its policy. This attitude is substantiated by the figures compiled in Table 1. As of July 31 of this year, one of the two draft boards in the County had granted 625 agricultural deferments. This, according to the 1940 Census of Agriculture, is approximately 1/10 of all persons engaged in agriculture and approximately 19 percent of all male workers engaged in agriculture during the peak labor season of the year. There was apparently no racial discrimination in the deferments as the percentage of the deferments granted to Negroes (82) was a little greater than their proportion of the total agricultural population (65 percent).

As Table 1 indicates, most of the deferments were to Negro laborers who make up the bulk of the agricultural labor force in the County. These men, in many cases, were key men on the larger farms and thus were more important to the County's agriculture than might appear at first glance.

The extent to which men entering the armed forces and industry has affected Broward County agriculture, however, is impossible to estimate from available evidence. As pointed out earlier, about two-thirds of the County peak-season laborers are migrants and are out of the County and State at the present time. Hence the labor supply situation will not be determined by the policy of the County Draft Board but boards in other states as well.

4. This does not seem to be of much importance in Broward County.
5. The labor situation undoubtedly would have been much more severe in the County had there been no deferments. As pointed out in 3, most of the key workers in agriculture were deferred. The importance of this would be difficult to over-estimate.

The owners and renters are asking for their own deferments, while the laborers and sharecroppers, (classified as laborers in Table 1) as a rule, are being deferred at the request of the larger farmers. Employers, generally, have tried to keep enough labor on their farms to carry farm operations up to the harvest season. Many, however, have not been successful





Table 1. Agricultural Deferments in Broward County, Up To and Including July 31, 1943 <sup>1/</sup>

Deferment Class	Age				Tenure				
	Under 25	25-29	30-38	Over 38	Owner	Foreman or Manager	Renter	Labor- er <sup>6/</sup>	Total
<u>White</u>									
2 C 2/	6	4	6	-	9	4	1	2	16
2 C-B 2/	-	-	-	13	6	3	0	4	13
3 C 4/	1	18	32	-	21	15	8	7	51
3 C-B 5/	-	-	-	30	15	3	2	9	30
Total	7	22	38	43	52	25	11	22	110
<u>Negro</u>									
2 C	12	17	20	-	4	0	1	74	79
2 C-B	-	-	-	127	5	0	2	119	127
3 C	21	43	104	-	9	0	3	156	168
3 C-B	-	-	-	130	11	0	11	119	141
Total	33	60	124	257	30	0	17	468	515
<u>Total</u>									
2 C	18	21	26	-	13	4	2	76	95
2 C-B	-	-	-	140	12	3	2	123	140
3 C	22	61	136	-	50	15	11	163	219
3 C-B	-	-	-	160	27	3	13	128	171
Total	40	82	162	300	82	25	28	490	625

<sup>1/</sup> Figures from only one of the two draft boards in the County

<sup>2/</sup> Single and under 30

<sup>3/</sup> Single and over 38

<sup>4/</sup> Married and under 38

<sup>5/</sup> Married and over 38

<sup>6/</sup> Includes sharecroppers





In this since so many of the workers have preferred to follow harvest operations up through the States and even into the Northern and Northeastern States. More money can be earned at harvest work than at steady and routine day labor.

Few agricultural deferments requested by employers are being refused. The local board has requested only that the employer ask that the worker be deferred and assurance given that he will have reasonably full-time employment.

Some of the large operators express doubt that the labor situation is being improved by many of the deferments. In the words of a large grower, "We are ruining our niggers by letting them know how badly we need them. Asking for their deferments, asking them to come and work for us, has brought about a lot of this loafing you see around the towns. I know niggers and if one ever thinks you need him badly he sure as hell won't work."

6. Very few industrial workers have returned to the farm. Those who have returned are farming for themselves. Only a few over 38 have returned from the service. Large numbers of local farm workers are now employed as stevedores at the local port who will be released for farm work during the harvest season.

#### B. Farm Wages and Availability of Farm Labor

1. Farm wage rates now being paid in Broward County vary from \$3.00 to \$3.50 per day without board. This is from 25 to 50 cents higher than at the same time last year. Some farmers are talking of reducing the wage to about \$2.75 per day so that it may be raised to \$3.00 by harvest time. However, there seems little likelihood of this happening and many of the Negro workers say they will leave if it does.

No decision has yet been made as to what wage will be paid for harvest labor which, incidentally, is largely piece work. Other than piece work, it is hoped, will be paid no more than \$3.00 to \$3.50 per day. Within the next week or so the farmers of the County plan to hold a meeting to discuss this problem and try to set a uniform rate. In this manner they hope to avert a situation that developed last year--an extreme diversity in the wage scale which kept the labor moving from one farm to another. By all means they want to avoid the scale of \$1.10 per hamper paid for picking beans last year by some of the Everglade farmers. It is hoped that the rates will begin at about 35 cents per hamper and rise later in the season to no more than 50 cents. This would be in line with last year's rates.





- 5-
2. No one knows. All the labor that can be furnished by the Extension Service will be welcome. Some of the larger farmers will probably try to recruit their own labor although they admit that "He may land in jail." Farmers are looking toward North Florida and South Georgia for workers with some help from the Bahamians. But, as pointed out earlier, farmers have not yet formed definite opinions as to the best methods for going after this labor. They do not believe that the Extension Service will be too effective in getting labor, although, as one farmer put it, "Maybe they will round up enough to help." They would prefer to go after the labor themselves but are not sure how far they can go in this direction without getting into trouble.
  3. (a) Making the needs of the County known to the State office by the Farm Placement representative.
  - (b) Negro schools in the County opened on July 17 in order that they may close during the months of December and January for picking beans.

Present recruitment is being attempted by the local Farm Placement man with little tangible result. His requests are based on a questionnaire recently mailed out to the farmers of the County. The farmers, however, are sending a few bus tickets to Negroes who have worked for them before. This will be speeded up as the season advances. Workers being recruited now are almost entirely Negro men. All farmers state that they cannot use women for pre-harvest labor. Only one farmer interviewed mentioned white workers. He is thinking of recruiting a few white families from Arkansas. His objection to this type of labor is that "it just keeps moving around."

4. All peak-seasonal workers obtainable can be used in Broward County during the winter months. Broward County and surrounding area is recognized by State agencies as one of the most critical labor problem areas in the State. Most of the recruited labor for the State will be used in Southern Florida vegetable crops, Central Florida citrus, and the Northeastern or Hastings potato area.

The inducement always offered to workers by the vegetable growers is "an opportunity to make 'good' money." Some few farmers are now arranging housing quarters on their farms. A big bean farmer of the County has recently bought 25 houses which he is moving to his land to house harvest labor. His motive in doing this is by no means altruistic but because "it looks like we've gotta bow and scrape before these damn niggers and agencies to get and keep any help."





5. Yes, to the first three questions. Labor outside the State will largely come from South Georgia--a group of migratory workers who follow the harvest each year from Southern Florida to New Jersey and back again. Some of these will come in at their own expense, others will probably be brought in by Extension or WPA and others will be sent bus tickets. Broward County farmers are depending heavily upon this group's return and most farmers are fairly sure that "they'll probably come back. This place in winter is Negro Heaven." Bahamians will be transported under the direction and control of WPA.
6. Negro men for pre-harvest labor, Negro men, women, and children and everything else available for harvest labor.

C. Women as Farm Workers

1. There will be considerably more Negro women used. Many of the farmers stated that Negro women and children proved to be better than men for picking beans last year--"they picked the rows cleaner." This year they are planning to use all the Negro women they can. Some more Negro women will be used in tomato picking this year. It was found last year that women proved to be satisfactory tomato pickers providing a few men were along to handle the baskets.
2. More work will be done this year by families of Negro farmers. White women just don't work in Broward fields. More women will be used to pick tomatoes as explained in 1.
3. (a) No new groups will be used--as before, it will be Negro women.  
(b) No.
4. No.

D. High School and College Students

1. Although Negro high school children have long been used in harvesting, more will be used this year than ever before. The college student picture unimportant here.
2. No preference although some advantages if they have had some farming experience.
3. (a) No opinions offered.  
(b) Some agricultural experience in the line they are expected to do.





4. (a) Prefer doing their own supervision.
- (b) None.

5. None being recruited. This plan seems to have had little attention in the County. Last year, County Agent recruited a group but the farmers then refused to employ them. No students are volunteering at present for farm work.

E. Employed Townspeople as Farm Workers

1. Farmers refuse to admit that they can use townspeople. There was very little use made of this source of labor last year and no plans for using it this year have been made.
- 2, 3, 4, 5--answered in 1.

F. Factory Workers with Rural Backgrounds as Potential Push-Out Farm Laborers

1. As indicated earlier, approximately 300 local Negro cane workers are now employed as stevedores at Fort Lauderdale. Many of these workers have agricultural deferments. These workers were hired with the understanding that they would be released as needed for farm work. Some of these, however, will be farming for themselves. There is little possibility of other factory or industrially employed workers returning to the farms. Farm workers in Broward County are almost 100 percent Negro and few Negroes are employed in local industries. Those in local service industries will, in large part, remain.
2. Neither employers nor workers are optimistic about the number of workers who will return from other occupations to farm work. As would be expected, more optimism is expressed by the workers than by the employers.

There is no likelihood of any bargain being made through any management-labor arrangements. Broward farmers may be forced to compromise before the harvest season is over but all are holding out until that time.

IV. COMMENTS ON TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

A. Absenteeism

Farmers, Agency representatives and industrial employees alike complain of the seriousness of absenteeism among local Negro workers. Many of the employers "estimate" that from 50 to 90 percent of the Negro workers refuse to work steadily. An employer of more than 800 Negro stevedores at the port claims that he





could carry out his contracts (unloading sugar) on 50 percent less labor if it would work six days per week.

The cause of this high percentage of absenteeism is almost universally said to be the result of the high wages paid the Negro workers. Most of the employers maintain that "if we could reduce our wage rates by half, our niggers would work twice as many hours."

The general excuse given by the worker for absenteeism is sickness. At the port there is some evidence for the truth of this statement. The work is extremely strenuous and, according to a local doctor, "The health of the Negroes we have here is extremely poor and the food they eat is of the cheapest quality. It's no surprise to me that large numbers of them are constantly ill." This conclusion could possibly be applied to farm work as well. Although the farm work is less difficult the general health and diet situation is the same.

B. Bahamian Labor

Very little Bahamian labor has been used in Broward County. However, the few farmers who have had an opportunity to use it are generally pleased with it. The most frequently heard objection to it is that for the most part the workers are from the city of Nassau and know nothing of agriculture. Of ten Bahamian laborers now employed by a local farmer, one is by trade a carpenter, two are painters, one a paper-hanger, and another a plumber.

It seems that most of the better Bahamian workers in the County are being held by a few farmers. Those who are drifting around are the poorer workers whom no farmers are able or want to keep for long.

Most of the farmers admit that "they are not as desirable as our Georgia niggers."

V. A. Notes on Procedure

As has been pointed out previously, the large farmers of Broward County are difficult to contact. All of them live in town and can seldom be found at home. This time I attempted to telephone them from the local towns and make definite appointments with them. This proved highly satisfactory and will be the procedure used henceforth in the County.

B. List of Better Informants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Color</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Mr. Norman Rose	W	Ft. Lauderdale	Farm Placement





<u>Name</u>	<u>Color</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Mr. B. E. Lawton	W	Ft. Lauderdale	County Agent
Mr. C. K. Davis	W	" "	SCS
Mr. R. McKenzie	W	" "	USES
Mrs. Reynolds	W	" "	Draft Board
Mr. Bennett	W	" "	Co. School Supt.
Mr. H.S. Cheshire	W	Pompano	Bean Farmer
Mr. L. S. Hinson	W	"	Bean Farmer
Mr. Bud Lyon	W	"	Bean Farmer
Mr. Louis Fisher	W	"	Mayor
Ben Jones	N	"	Small Negro Farmer
Tom Burns	N	"	" " "
Bob Smith	N	"	" " "
Jake Forrester	N	"	Negro Laborer
Mr. Ellis	W	Port Everglades	Foreman Port
Mr. Thomas	W	Dania	Tomato Farmer
Mr. O'Neill	W	"	" "
Mr. Chance	W	"	" "
Mr. Wray	W	Davie	Grove Foreman
Mr. Ogden	W	Pompano	Veg. Farmer
Mr. Bailey	W	"	" "

C. Suggested Topic for Future Study

Investigate the true situation, extent and cause of reported absenteeism.

